

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

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INFO AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR ETRN SC

SUBJ: ST. KITTS PRESSES FOR BWIA SERVICE

1. DEPUTY PREMIER PAUL SOUTHWELL VISITED EMBASSY FEBRUARY 7 TO REQUEST USG APPROVAL OF BWIA SERVICE TO ST. KITTS ON ROUTE NOW HELD (BUT NOT FLOWN) BY EAL. AS SOUTHWELL EXPLAINS IT, ROUTE TO ST. KITTS FROM NEW YORK FELL TO EAL AS RESULT OF LATTER'S ACQUISITION OF CARIBAIR THREE YEARS AGO. SOUTHWELL CLAIMED THAT ROUTE ONLY EXISTED FOR US CARRIER AND SAID THAT ST. KITTS BADLY NEEDED SERVICE BY AN ADDITIONAL CARRIER TO SUPPLEMENT UNCERTAIN LIAT SERVICE AND FLIGHTS BY SMALLER AIRLINES PRINNAIR AND WINNAIR. SOUTHWELL SAID HE HAD SPOKEN TO BWIA ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS (CHAIRMAN OF BOARD DODDRIDGE ALLEYNE) AND THAT BWIA IS MOST ANXIOUS TO BEGIN SERVICE TO SK AS PART OF ITS NEW YORK ROUTE BUT THAT AIRLINE DOES NOT WISH TO BECOME INVOLVED IN LONG-DRAWN BUREAUCRATIC HASSLE ABOUT ROUTE RIGHTS.

2. SOUTHWELL STRESSED THAT POOR AIR SERVICE WAS HURTING ST. KITTS TOURISM BADLY. HE SAID THAT HOTEL OCCUPANCY RATES WERE CURRENTLY IN VICINITY OF 20 PERCENT AND THAT COMMONWEALTH HOLIDAY INNS (HI), WHICH HAS 200 ROOM OPERATION THERE, WAS THREATENING TO SURRENDER ITS LEASE AND WITHDRAW UNLESS THERE WERE SOME IMPROVEMENT IN NEAR FUTURE. SOUTHWELL REMINDED EMBASSY THAT HE HAD RAISED THIS ISSUE DURING VISIT TO DEPARTMENT IN AUGUST 1974 AT WHICH TIME HE HAD BEEN TOLD BY EB/OA THAT DEPARTMENT WAS NOT IN POSITION TO PRESS EAL OR OTHER CARRIERS INTO UNDERTAKING AN UN-

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ECONOMIC ACTIVITY. SOUTHWELL EXPRESSED VIEW THAT SOME SORT OF

USG URGING HAD PLAYED ROLE IN RECENT EAL DECISION TO BEGIN SERVICE TO ANTIGUA AND HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY SIMILAR ACTION COULD NOT BE UNDERTAKEN FOR ST. KITTS.

3. SOUTHWELL SAID THAT HE OR PREMIER ROBERT BRADSHAW PLANNED TO VISIT WASHINGTON AGAIN IN EARLY MARCH WITH BWIA TO PRESS DEPARTMENT AGAIN ON MATTER.

4. EAL REGIONAL MANAGER INFORMS US THAT CARRIER HAS NO REPEAT NO INTENTIONS OF OPERATING INTO ST. KITTS BECAUSE OF ISLAND'S VERY LIMITED NUMBER OF TOURIST BEDS. MOST OTHER CARRIERS HERE SHARE EAL VIEW. EMBASSY THEREFORE SEES NO POINT IN APPROACHING EAL ON THIS MATTER.

5. COMMENT: IT IS NOT CLEAR TO EMBASSY WHAT ROLE EAL PLAYS IN MATTER OF EXTENDING RIGHTS TO BWIA. WE UNDERSTAND THAT EAL HAS BEEN DESIGNATED BY CAB TO FLY ROUTE (INCLUDING ST. KITTS) AS PART OF UK BILATERAL WHICH IT INHERITED THROUGH CARIBAIR. IT SEEMS TO US THAT, RATHER THAN APPROACHING USG, LOGICAL COURSE OF ACTION WOULD BE FOR GOSK TO APPROACH HMG AND ATTEMPT TO HAVE BOARD OF TRADE DESIGNATE BWIA TO FLY ROUTE WHICH WOULD INCLUDE ST. KITTS. SINCE BRITISH AIRWAYS DOES NOT FLY INTO ST. KITTS THERE DOES NOT SEEM TO BE ANY REASON FOR HMG TO DENY SUCH A REQUEST.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT DEPARTMENT BE PREPARED TO MEET GOSK/ BWIA REPRESENTATIVES IF AND WHEN THEY SHOW UP. WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE ANY THOUGHTS DEPARTMENT MIGHT HAVE ON COURSE OF ACTION OUTLINED PARA 5 ABOVE.
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